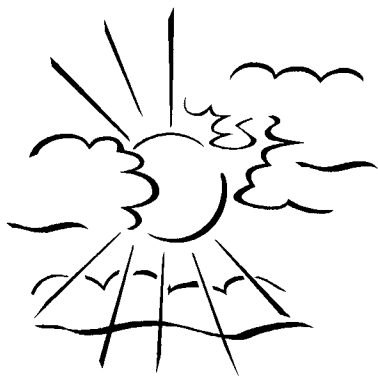


***Department
of
Human
Services***

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Thursday, September 8, 2005

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Michigan cities help evacuees settle in state

About 4,000 housing units are available to people displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

By Francis X. Donnelly, Lanetta J. Williams and Mark Hornbeck / The Detroit News

TROY -- The Williams, an extended family of 29 whose ages range from 8 months to 84 years, came all the way to Michigan to escape the watery debris left by Hurricane Katrina.

But the New Orleans clan still lacks many basic necessities, such as a long-term place to stay.

Help is on the way for the family and 600 other evacuees who have ended up in Michigan, state officials said Wednesday.

More than 30 Michigan cities have offered 4,000 housing units for the state's newest residents, ranging from public housing units to vacant apartments to residents' vacation homes. The state will begin pairing the people and places after learning what's available.

It can't come soon enough for Fallon Williams, 19, who, with the rest of her relatives, has been staying at an Auburn Hills hotel thanks to a private benefactor.

"We don't know where we're going next," Williams said as she sifted through donated clothes at Kensington Community Church in Troy. "It's really been hard, but we're having a lot of help."

Michigan officials believe they can find more permanent housing by the end of the week for the 235 evacuees who remain at a National Guard base near Battle Creek.

A third of the 289 people who were flown there Monday hope to move in with relatives in other states, said Marianne Udow, director of the state Department of Human Services.

The rest will likely stay in Michigan.

How to help
Relief Organizations:
[Red Cross](#); 1-800-
[HELP-NOW](#)
[Salvation Army](#); 1-800-
[SAL-ARMY](#)
[Catholic Charities](#); 1-
800-919-9338
[American Jewish](#)
[Committee's Hurricane](#)
[Katrina Fund](#)
[Bush-Clinton Katrina](#)
[Fund](#)
[America's Second](#)
[Harvest Network](#)
[Baton Rouge Area](#)
[Foundation](#)
[Episcopal Relief &](#)
[Development](#); 1-800-
334-7626
[United Methodist](#)
[Committee on Relief](#); 1-
800-554-8583
[Operation Blessing, a](#)
[Christian relief](#)
[organization](#)
[Southern Baptist](#)
[Convention Disaster](#)
[Relief](#)
[Christian Disaster](#)
[Response](#)
[The Humane Society of](#)
[the United States](#)
[AmeriCares](#)
[ELCA Domestic](#)
[Disaster](#)
[Response/Lutheran](#)
[Disaster Response](#)
[Habitat for Humanity](#)
[International](#)
[Church World Service](#)
[Network for Good](#)
[Louisiana Society for](#)
[the Prevention of](#)
[Cruelty to Animals](#)
[Michigan's Hurricane](#)
[Hotline \(offers of goods](#)
[and services\): 888-535-](#)
6136
[B'nai B'rith Disaster](#)
[Relief Fund](#)
[Christian Reformed](#)
[World Relief Committee](#)
[Faithfest.net](#)
[NAACP Disaster Relief](#)
[Fund](#)
[Presbyterian Church](#)
[Disaster Program](#)
[United Jewish](#)
[Communities](#)
[Related links](#)
[FEMA: Charity tips](#)
[National Voluntary](#)
[Organizations Active in](#)
[Disaster](#)
[Hydrologic Information](#)
[Center \(river flooding\)](#)

So far, 54 of the evacuees who were brought to Fort Custer Training Center in Augusta have left to join relatives, Udow said.

"We're not looking for rooms in homes," she said. "They need a place where they can have dignity, privacy."

Michigan had been told by federal officials that another 300 to 500 evacuees may come to the state but none arrived Wednesday via the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Fort Custer is operating smoothly with just one medical emergency, a state official said. A woman had a seizure and was transported to a local hospital.

Gov Jennifer Granholm and the American Red Cross will announce today details of a state fund-raising drive for hurricane disaster relief.

Granholm learned during a conference call Wednesday with FEMA that evacuees will be issued debit cards valued at \$2,000 to spend on personal items.

The Associated Press contributed to this report. You can reach Francis X. Donnelly at (313) 223-4186 or fdonnelly@detnews.com.

Published September 8, 2005

Lansing ready, waiting for Katrina evacuees Help, housing set up for 300 storm victims

By Nicole Geary
Lansing State Journal

As state officials prepare to assign evacuees from the hurricane-torn Gulf Coast to Michigan cities, Lansing officials say they are ready to welcome more than 300 with housing and other vital resources if necessary. Within about 24 hours, agencies throughout the area mobilized to secure 92 apartment units and homes, access to health care, space in Lansing schools and transportation for evacuees sheltered at Battle Creek's Fort Custer.

"Everything, we believe, is in order," Lansing Mayor Tony Benavides said. "We are ready."

Today, the state Department of Human Services could begin sending evacuees to Michigan communities that answered Gov. Jennifer Granholm's request for temporary housing, governor spokeswoman Liz Boyd said.

"We are pleased to see (Lansing) step up," Boyd said, noting it was too soon Wednesday to say how many evacuees Lansing could receive.

More than 40 of the 289 people who arrived at Fort Custer on Monday moved on to stay with family or friends, Boyd said. It's also uncertain whether Michigan will receive more.

"It's very hard at this point to predict what the numbers will look like, but we want to be prepared for a large number," said Susan Hull, director of Ingham County's Department of Human Services.

Together, with the local Red Cross chapter, the department plans to process applications for Medicaid and assistance with food and rent through a central location before families are connected with one of the available housing units.

The Lansing School District will enroll any child who arrives, Deputy Superintendent Jerry Jennings said.

Dean Transportation owner Kellie Dean said his company and the Capital Area Transportation Authority will work together to provide all transportation needs.

The county health department and a lineup of private doctors, nurses and psychologists also are standing by to provide health needs.

Still, Lansing needs community support to strengthen its plan, officials say.

How to help

Several agencies preparing to offer services to Hurricane Katrina evacuees who might be coming to Lansing for up to six months need volunteers and donations:

- St. Vincent Catholic Charities - 323-4734
- Central United Methodist Church - 485-9477
- Capital Area United Way - 337-8211
- St. Stephen's Community Church - 484-2180

St. Vincent Catholic Charities, the agency leading the areawide effort, needs a wide array of furnishings for housing units, from furniture and appliances to linens and cleaning supplies. There also are groups looking for employers willing to provide jobs, residents wishing to share their cars and families who can show the temporary residents around town through an adopt-a-family program. Volunteers also are needed.

"We're going to make sure they're well taken care of while they're here," said state Rep. Michael Murphy, D-Lansing, one of several local leaders who attended Wednesday's news conference to announce the plan.

"This community knows how to show love."

Contact Nicole Geary at 377-1066 or ngeary@lsj.com. The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Michigan looks to find housing for Katrina victims

By DAVID EGGERT

Sep 7, 6:14 PM EDT

Associated Press Writer

Traverse City Eagle

LANSING, Mich. (AP) -- Evacuees displaced by Hurricane Katrina could be moved from a military base near Battle Creek to more permanent housing early next week, state officials said Wednesday.

At least one-third of the original 289 victims who were flown to the state Monday hope to move in with relatives in other states, Michigan Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow said. Some people already have left to join their families, leaving 247 at Fort Custer Training Center in Augusta. Most of those remaining will need housing in Michigan.

"They need a place where they can have dignity, privacy - where they can be comfortable with their families," Udow told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

More than 30 cities have offered housing, Udow said. The state, which is interviewing evacuees, will begin matching them with housing after it receives more information on what kind of housing is available.

The cities had to turn in their inventories by Wednesday. The state has identified about 4,000 available housing units so far.

The evacuees can tell authorities where they want to live. The state is trying to put children near schools and match everyone with families who will help them adapt to their new communities. The hurricane victims are expected to live six months or longer in their new homes.

Earlier Wednesday, officials heard that up to 500 more people could be sent from the hurricane zone to Michigan, which has offered to host up to 10,000, but it's looking increasingly unlikely that the state would get anywhere near that number.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm took part in a Wednesday conference call with other governors, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Federal Emergency Management Agency chief Michael Brown. The governors were told FEMA hopes the flow of evacuees to other states would begin to diminish, Granholm spokeswoman Liz Boyd said.

Michigan residents have offered up their vacation homes and landlords have notified the state about vacant apartments and townhouses, Udow said. Some cities also have public housing units available, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture has donated apartments scattered across the state, she said.

"We're not looking for rooms in homes," Udow said. "We want people to have their own space."

Besides helping the evacuees at Fort Custer, the state also plans to help find housing for about 150 people displaced by the hurricane who are staying in Oakland County hotels, Udow said.

Lansing city officials said Wednesday they could house up to 500 people in furnished apartments and public housing. They also plan to provide schooling, health care, psychological counseling, clothing, food and transportation and help evacuees look for jobs.

"The first thing is to get a house," said Sherri Solomon-Jozwiak, president and CEO of St. Vincent Catholic Charities, Lansing's lead agency overseeing assistance for Katrina evacuees.

In Grand Rapids, the American Red Cross said 78 people displaced by the hurricane have visited its site there - some seeking shelter, others requesting additional services. If Fort Custer evacuees are sent to Grand Rapids, the Red Cross said it will find them a place to live.

Kalamazoo Gazette

September 8, 2005

Letters

We must do more to help homeless

A reference in the Aug. 26 Kalamazoo Gazette touched a nerve for me. Two students in a front-page story said a common perception on campus is that ``downtown is a `shady place' overrun by homeless people."

I am concerned that homeless people are seen as obstacles to business and the good life for people who have money to spend.

This is cruel. Homelessness is increasing because critical systems are failing. Most homeless people have suffered far greater adversity than the average citizen. To see homeless people as impediments to shopping rather than as human beings is an ugly and dangerous approach.

A humane community will see poor and homeless people as fellow citizens and valuable human beings who are trying hard to survive against great odds.

When our social and economic failures cause an increase in poor and homeless people, we must not allow our community to dehumanize them by restricting them to shelter ghettos, refusing them service in restaurants, using scare tactics to whip up neighborhoods against them, and refusing to provide housing and services they need.

We must not continue down that road as a community. We must do better.

Rick Stravers

Executive director

Open Door and Next Door Shelters



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker (517) 373-7394

Macomb County DHS Celebrates New Approach to Foster Care ***"Family to Family" Keeps Foster Care Kids in their Schools and Communities***

September 8, 2005

WARREN – For many years, foster children in Michigan were often placed outside of their own communities and moved multiple times while in care. There is substantial research indicating that children in foster care who have frequent contact with their birth parents, remain in their schools, and continue their existing friendship and family networks, have a higher rate of successful reunification with their birth parents.

"Children are our most precious resource," Governor Jennifer M. Granholm said. "It is critical that we work together to do everything we can not only to ensure the safety of our children, but also to provide them with a stable environment in which they are surrounded by adults who care about them and will help them learn and grow."

That is why the Michigan Department of Human Services is working to implement a child welfare reform initiative called Family to Family in every county in the state. The goal of Family to Family is to place children who must be removed from their families with one permanent and stable family in the child's own community until reunification with birth families can occur or until the child is released for adoption.

The Family to Family initiative has already been successfully implemented in several counties across the state, including Macomb County. Family to Family is a partnership between the local Department of Human Services and the community to reduce disruption in the lives of at-risk children. This approach ensures that birth parents, foster parents and community representatives are involved in the decision-making process concerning the placement and service needs of at-risk children.

In an effort to help Macomb County residents better understand the Family to Family initiative, the Macomb County Department of Human Services is hosting a community forum on September 8 at 10:30 a.m. at **Mt. Calvary Family Community Center, 8129 Packard, in Warren.**

This event will feature a foster parent and a former foster child speaking about their experience with the child welfare system, as well as representatives from several Macomb County community human service agencies.

-MORE-

“When children are placed in foster care they often do not understand what has happened and why they cannot live with their parents,” Marianne Udow, Michigan Department of Human Services director, said. “When we ask children where they want to be, no matter how dysfunctional their family is, the children overwhelmingly say they want to live with their family. With the Family to Family approach we are able to keep kids in their own neighborhoods and communities by placing them with extended family or kin. The less disruption children encounter, the easier it will be for them to succeed in school and in life.”

The Family to Family model protects children by:

- ☐ Increasing family involvement and investment in developing safety and service plans for their children.
- ☐ Utilizing extended family, kin and community-based resources to support the family and monitor the safety of the children.
- ☐ Providing better information to DHS staff to ensure that all safety issues are addressed and back-up plans are available.
- ☐ Keeping the children in the community, their school and with siblings who know what is “normal” for the child and will be alert to any changes that may signal problems.
- ☐ Greater use of individualized services to meet the unique needs of a particular family.

For more information about the Family to Family initiative, visit the Michigan Department of Human Services Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs.

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Suspect in 2-year-old boy's death unable to explain child's injuries

Thursday, September 08, 2005

By John Agar
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- In his last hours, 2-year-old Armon Colar suffered a broken arm, fractured rib, a belt whipping and, finally, violent shaking and blunt-force trauma that left his body limp. The 17-year-old caring for the boy and two older sisters told police he was frustrated the toddler wet himself and would not stop crying after being disciplined with the belt.

"All right," suspect Leeclifton Moore told Grand Rapids police Detective Phil Betz. "I shook the baby. He wouldn't stop crying or moping."

That account came Wednesday at a probable-cause hearing before Grand Rapids District Judge Benjamin Logan to determine if Moore should stand trial for felony murder in the boy's Aug. 25 death. The hearing likely will resume in two weeks once defense attorney Thomas Parker reviews police reports.

After the hearing, a skirmish broke out in the hallway between the victim's father, Anthony Colar, and one of the defendant's supporters. Kent County sheriff's Deputy Mel Atkins stepped in and told Colar: "He's not worth it. It's not worth it."

Police eventually convinced Colar, wearing a T-shirt with "R.I.P. Armon" and his son's picture, to leave.

Colar and his wife, Alicia, had separated before their son was hurt inside her apartment at 1923 Bradford St. NE.

Moore, her new live-in boyfriend, watched the children -- including Adriyanna, 6, and Aqwetta, 4 -- on Aug. 24 after Alicia Colar left at 10 a.m. to visit his grandmother a few blocks away.

"My son was fine," she testified.

Three hours later, Moore told her to come home because "something's wrong with my son."

Her son was limp, with blood coming from his mouth. He took uneven breaths and gasped for air as she raced him to the emergency room at Spectrum Health Butterworth Campus.

Moore offered her little explanation. He hadn't hurt the children before, she said. But when asked if she had been concerned by his swearing at the children, she said: "A little."

Moore told police he had used a belt to discipline the boy -- "once because he had an accident while potty training and once because he wouldn't stop crying."

He couldn't explain the injuries but said he probably bruised the boy's chest while doing CPR chest compressions. He told investigators he shook the boy, but not violently, in an attempt to wake him.

But Moore's statements didn't make sense to Dr. David Start, a forensic pathologist who did the autopsy.

"There was really no explanation I was given to explain these injuries," he testified. "There were multiple, blunt-force injuries."

The boy had injuries to his head, legs, buttocks, back, right arm and scrotum. His brain was swollen, and he had internal injuries, including a torn liver and bruised lung. He also had a cut around his penis.

Start likened the injuries to those found on car-crash victims or those who fall several stories. Moore, jailed without bond, faces a mandatory life in prison without parole if convicted of felony murder. He showed little emotion. As deputies led him away, someone in the gallery said, "Hey, Lee." He looked back, and said, "What's up, man?"

Deal likely in sex-abuse case

Thursday, September 08, 2005

By Pat Rombyer prombyer@citpat.com -- 768-4924

An Albion Public Safety officer has tentatively agreed to a plea bargain that would reduce the charges against him and spare him a prison sentence.

Kyle Chaney, 39, was charged in August with possessing materials sexually abusive to a child, engaging in activity sexually abusive to a child, accosting for immoral purposes and second-degree child abuse. The crimes allegedly occurred during the past 14 months.

The charges include accusations he took nude photographs of a minor. He is being prosecuted by Chris Ann Johnson, a Kalamazoo County assistant prosecutor.

Chaney waived his right Wednesday to a preliminary examination in Battle Creek's 10th District Court, which spared an alleged 16-year-old victim from testifying. He was bound over to Circuit Court. No date was set for his arraignment.

Mark Webb, Chaney's attorney, told District Judge Samuel Durham a plea agreement has tentatively been reached that would allow Chaney to plead guilty to possessing materials sexually abusive to a child, which carries a maximum 20-year prison sentence, and to a misdemeanor charge of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

In exchange, Chaney would be sentenced to five years' probation and lose his computer seized for evidence. He would avoid prison, but the judge could still sentence him to jail time.

"Without knowing the details of the case, it makes me wonder what the message is that's being sent to the community and to the victim (with the plea)," said Teresa Mahaffey, who works with sexual assault victims at Jackson's AWARE Shelter. "She may feel that the system isn't holding the perpetrator accountable."

September 7, 2005

Bill goes long way in protecting kids

We urge Gov. Jennifer Granholm to sign, with all reasonable dispatch, a bill containing provisions we believe will ultimately go a country mile in protecting children from sexual predators.

The measure, as controversial as any we've seen come down the legislative pike in recent years, would change state law to allow into evidence at criminal trial testimony on the defendant's prior bad acts.

It's part of a multi-bill package aimed at preventing sex offenders from getting near children in schools and day care centers, The Associated Press reported. Past behavior already can be used in limited circumstances to show motive or intent, but that's not the same as character evidence, AP said.

For those of you who have other things to do besides sit through local court hearings or "Law and Order" reruns, prior bad acts are all those offenses a defendant has committed, BEFORE being charged with his current crime.

Court rules and state law in Michigan have held that such material introduced to define a defendant's character would unduly prejudice a jury.

Prosecutors have long grumbled that juries aren't getting the full picture, so to speak.

Defense lawyers, not surprisingly, have taken a different tact. They have contended that juries would convict their clients because they were bad people and not necessarily because they were guilty of the charged offense.

And that's the way it has been, until a recent string of high profile cases nationally involving the kidnapping, rape and murder of children apparently got state lawmakers thinking.

Enter into the debate State Sen. Alan Cropsey, co-sponsor of the bill. The DeWitt Republican and a lot of others think that in the area of sexual crimes, prior behavior is a sound indicator of future conduct.

A top defense lawyer has voiced protest, maintaining that such material will mean virtually all defendants will be convicted.

Cutting through the usual haze surrounding any controversial bill, we believe there are a couple of things that are important here.

First, there can be no doubt that sexual predators are habitual creatures. They keep going until caught. Regrettably, that's just the way it is with those people. It's hard to imagine legitimate arguments to the contrary.

Second, and this is especially true with the development of the Internet, our children are more exposed than ever before. We would be remiss if we didn't do everything possible to protect them.

Finally, the feds already have such a statute, although it's only occasionally used. California, though, does have a similar statute on its books.

The State Legislature has already approved this measure, which is on its way to the governor's desk. Granholm has indicated a willingness to sign it, something we view as an idea whose time has come.

Custody After Civil Union Pits States and Judges

By ADAM LIPTAK
The New York Times

Published: September 8, 2005

MONTPELIER, Vt., Sept. 7 - Judges in Vermont and Virginia have different ideas about what is best for Isabella Miller-Jenkins, 3, born to a woman who had a civil union with another woman in Vermont. The relationship ended two years ago. Now each woman says Isabella is her daughter, with one asserting exclusive mother

The judge in Vermont ruled that the women should "be treated no differently than a husband and wife." He established a visiting schedule and held the biological mother, Lisa Miller, in contempt of court when she failed to comply with it.

The judge in Virginia ruled that Ms. Miller had the sole right to decide who could see the child. He ruled that the former partner, Janet Miller-Jenkins, had no "parentage or visitation rights."

Legal experts say the decisions, which reached State Supreme Court here on Wednesday, are the first to present a direct conflict between two state courts on a substantial legal question arising from a same-sex couple's union. The decisions offer a preview, the experts added, of what are quite likely to be many similar conflicts around the nation.

Ms. Miller moved back to Virginia, where Isabella was born, in September 2003. The couple had visited Vermont briefly for the civil union ceremony in 2000 and lived there for more than a year after Isabella was born in 2002.

"When I left Janet," Ms. Miller said in a telephone interview, "I left the homosexual lifestyle and drew closer to God."

Ms. Miller-Jenkins, who declined to be interviewed, has said the couple planned and cared for Isabella together. She read a statement outside the courthouse after arguments on Wednesday.

"I sincerely believe," she said, "that it is best for my daughter that both of her parents continue to be an active, loving, responsible part of her life."

The justices here were largely skeptical of the arguments offered by a lawyer for Ms. Miller, who, like her former partner, had been known as Ms. Miller-Jenkins. The justices also indicated that they were working in uncharted territory.

"The assisted reproductive technologies are galloping ahead of existing law," Justice Marilyn S. Skoglund said.

A few minutes later, Justice Denise R. Johnson asked about the consequences of inconsistent rulings. A lawyer for Ms. Miller-Jenkins, Jennifer L. Levi, said the question was premature. A Virginia appeals court will hear arguments in that suit next Wednesday.

"I'm just trying to figure out what the effect of our decision is," Justice Johnson said, in a tone suggesting it might have no effect because Isabella and Ms. Miller live in Virginia.

The cases involve the interaction of two sets of laws. At the state level, Vermont and Virginia have laws that say the first court to take jurisdiction of a custody case should make the final determination. That would seem to help Ms. Miller-Jenkins here.

In November 2003, it was Ms. Miller, the Virginian, who filed papers in Vermont to dissolve the union. In them, Ms. Miller acknowledged that Isabella was a child of the union and asked the court to allow her former partner to have contact with the girl. Her lawyers have since taken varying positions. Ms. Miller now says she was confused and did not mean to acknowledge any parental relationship between her former partner and Isabella.

A 2004 Virginia law, the Marriage Affirmation Act, makes same-sex unions from other states "void in all respects in Virginia." Judge John R. Prosser, of Frederick County Circuit Court in Winchester, Va., relied on that law in October in granting sole custody of Isabella to Ms. Miller.

Two potentially conflicting federal laws add to the confusion. The Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act largely tracks the state custody laws and requires other states to defer to the first courts to hear such cases. But the federal Defense of Marriage Act says states need not give effect to same-sex unions.

Joan Hollinger, who teaches adoption law at the University of California, Berkeley, said the Vermont judge had the better legal arguments. But, Ms. Hollinger added, "Vermont courts are in practical terms powerless to enforce their valid orders in Virginia if Virginia courts simply say no."

If the states' highest courts issue conflicting decisions, the case could head for the United States Supreme Court, said Mathew D. Staver, a lawyer for Ms. Miller. Mr. Staver added that similar conflicts could arise from decisions in California, where State Supreme Court ruled last month that both people in a lesbian couple should be considered a child's parents in many circumstances. The Legislature in Sacramento passed a same-sex marriage law on Tuesday.

Ms. Levi disagreed, saying the case was an instance of the ordinary heartbreak after a family breaks up. "It's an unfortunate reality that children get put in the middle," she said. "Ultimately, what this case is going to decide is whether children born to same-sex couples should be treated the same or differently as other children."

Andrew Koppelman, a law professor at Northwestern, addressed such case in a book on interstate recognition of gay marriages that Yale University Press will publish next year.

"If the Virginia court is correct," Professor Koppelman wrote, "then no parental right arising out of a same-sex marriage is secure anywhere in the United States."

Ms. Miller said Isabella neither knew about the case nor cares about its consequences. "She doesn't even ask about Janet," Ms. Miller said. "I am the only mother."

In Vermont, Judge Cohen held Ms. Miller in contempt in September for not allowing visits to Isabella. He has not imposed sanctions.

"The judicial system as a whole simply cannot allow parties to try to take advantage of legal and cultural differences," he wrote, "which may make one state favor the position of a particular party over another."

Ms. Miller said she found the idea that a court could force her to allow Isabella to visit Ms. Miller-Jenkins particularly hurtful. "It would be like somebody off the streets coming and taking my daughter," she said.

"They have no ties to my daughter."

DESIREE COOPER: Storm shows poverty's ruin

September 8, 2005

BY DESIREE COOPER
FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

Hurricane Katrina's violent winds not only destroyed thousands of lives, it also destroyed our smug national pride.

From the BBC to newspapers in Uganda, the world is peering at the dark underbelly of American apartheid. It's inescapable -- our callousness to the degrading poverty of blacks in the Deep South compounded the Katrina tragedy and perhaps even colored the response to the disaster.

Thankfully, Americans have been as generous as they have been outraged by the unfolding human misery. With pundits and politicians calling for an investigation into what didn't happen and why, there's hope that we have begun to rethink our neglect of America's poor, minorities and urban centers.

Still, I'm not sure what the floodwaters have taught us that we couldn't have learned from the riots in Los Angeles and Detroit 40 years ago. I'm not sure what gale-force winds uncovered that wasn't obvious when crack cocaine created a tidal wave of addiction and violence in the 1980s.

Our problem is a lack of imagination. We can't imagine that anyone is poor, addicted, illiterate or unemployable in this country unless they deserve it. And as long as we can't imagine ourselves in the shoes of the less fortunate, we will remain long on blame and short on empathy.

Poor investment

On Tuesday, the day that Michigan welcomed 260 Katrina evacuees, I sat at a hearing for Nathaniel Abraham. At 19, the Pontiac teen has spent the past eight years in state custody for the 1997 murder of Ronnie Greene Jr. Nate was only 11 at the time.

Sentenced to the W. J. Maxey Boys Training School in Whitmore Lake, he's had to execute a difficult adolescence beneath the public spotlight. In 16 months he'll be released from juvenile custody whether or not he's been rehabilitated. Oakland County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley is skeptical, noting that if Nate can't manage his anger, he'll end up in the adult criminal system. His lawyer, Daniel Bagdade, says that Nate has made progress. A high school graduate, Nate now speaks to young people about violence.

I wonder how his life would be different -- and whether Greene would still be alive -- if Pontiac had received disaster relief eight years ago? Nearly one in five Pontiac families live below the poverty rate -- twice the national average.

Would Greene still be alive if Nate had received intense counseling through the financially strapped public schools? If there had been a neighborhood recreational center in lieu of street gangs?

The storm ahead

In February, the state closed the half-million dollar program that was turning Nate's life around.

Meanwhile, we spend \$1.8 billion a year warehousing people in prisons, \$62 million more than Michigan spends on higher education. Living as I do in Detroit, the poorest city in the United States, I marvel how we'll pay a king's ransom to punish the underprivileged before we'll pay a nickel to help them.

Now that you've done your part for the victims of Katrina, it's time to pay attention to the disaster brewing in our own backyard.

Contact DESIREE COOPER at 313-222-6625 or cooper@freepress.com

Trotter clinic reopens eye, dental facilities

Thursday, September 08, 2005

By Gary Morrison
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Mel Trotter Ministries' dental and eye-care clinic has reopened after being closed for almost a year.

The clinics originally were in the basement and closed because of flooding, said Doug Redford, the ministry's advancement officer. When the ministry decided to rebuild, the offices moved to the first floor.

"We really hated to close it down because so many people need service," Redford said. "We see people every day that need both vision and dental care."

Artriss Rodgers said she can now get the tooth extraction she needs.

"I've had to put up with pain for a while," said Rodgers. "Without the dental clinic, I would have to find a way to pay for it,"

Steve May, the ministry's financial officer, said insurance paid part of the \$30,000 cost of moving and remodeling the clinics because of the flooding.

"We also got a break because a number of companies donated material," he said.

Dr. Charles Cole, who volunteers three times a month, manages the clinic and said its new location is an improvement. The dental and eye-care operations are now combined into one clinic, he said. The office is also in the process of automating its records to provide more efficient service.

"We're also working on a partnership with Grand Rapids Community College so that dental hygiene students can come here and help," Cole said.

Both clinics can use more volunteers, said Sandra Enders, the ministry's communications director. Especially needed are a vision specialist available at least once a week, more dentists and dental and vision assistants.

Families' needs rival pantry gifts

Thursday, September 08, 2005

By Morgan Jarema
The Grand Rapids Press

LOWELL -- After a recent appeal to help stock the near-empty shelves at Flat River Outreach Ministries' food pantry, the shelves are looking more full.

The problem is, Lowell-area families are lining up just as fast to receive the recent donations of canned and boxed food, produce and personal-care items.

"We had seven people drop stuff off last week, but as soon as they dropped it off, we were putting it in boxes for pick-up," food pantry volunteer Jackie Rinks said.

Flat River Outreach Ministries has distributed more than 400 boxes of food since January to needy families in the area. Seventy-eight families received food in July, and 65 families received food in August.

Director Jody Haybarker said donations at the 5-year-old pantry typically peak through the holidays, but drop during warmer months.

Money that is taken in from the sale of donated items at the ministries' thrift store helps stock the food pantry, but Flat River Outreach Ministries relies heavily on donations.

Pantry staff attribute the warm-weather slowdown to the lack of school and corporate food drives during summer. But that, coupled with a slow economy and children who receive free or reduced-cost meals at school being on summer vacation, means food pantries -- and families -- suffer.

Rinks worries that with a continued sluggish economy and the projected increase in home heating costs, the slow donation trend and increase in need will continue.

"I think this winter is going to be hard for a lot of people who will be asking themselves, 'Do we eat or pay our heat bill?' " she said.

Items may be dropped off at the ministries' headquarters, 519 E. Main St., during pantry hours: from 2 to 4:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, from 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesday and from 10 a.m. to noon Friday.

PINCKNEY**Learning briefs****HARTLAND****School Board cuts breakfast program**

After holding a public hearing, the Hartland Consolidated School Board decided to cut the school breakfast program. State school code requires a school district operates a breakfast program if more than 20 percent of the enrollment are needy students. School officials said 6 percent of the district's students are needy. Scott Bacon, assistant superintendent, said district surveys taken over the last nine years, show a lack of interest in the program. Bacon said teachers and principals at the various schools take care of situations of need as they become aware of them.

Fallout may include 400,000 lost jobs

Report makes first estimates of economic toll

By **MARTIN CRUTSINGER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The human cost of Hurricane Katrina is evident with every heartbreaking image from the Gulf Coast. Now the government has taken its first crack at determining

the economic tally.

The verdict from the Congressional Budget Office: not good, though maybe not as bad as first envisioned.

In report Wednesday to congressional leaders, the CBO predicted Katrina will result in job losses totaling 400,000 in the coming months. Also, it is expected to reduce growth by as much as a full percentage point in the second half of this year and push gas prices up by 40 percent from their levels in midsummer.

These impacts were described as "significant but not overwhelming." Still, the CBO said the economy could suffer a more serious blow if energy supply disruptions along the Gulf Coast last longer than expected.

The CBO estimated that gasoline prices will peak in September, at about 40 percent higher than in midsummer. That could be near, given that the average retail price of regular unleaded gasoline climbed by 46 cents last week to \$3.07 per gallon,

CBO report highlights

- **Economic growth:** Economic growth in the United States is projected to be reduced from one-half to 1 percentage point on an annualized basis in the second half of this year.
- **Employment:** Total job losses through the end of this year are

estimated at 400,000. Before the hurricane, economists were predicting job gains of around 150,000 to 200,000 a month.

- **Insured losses:** Privately insured losses from the hurricane could exceed \$30 billion.

34 percent above the July nationwide average.

The spurt in the cost of gasoline will reduce overall economic growth by 0.4 per-

cent in the July-September quarter and by 0.9 percent in the October-December period as consumers cut back on spending in other areas

by around \$38 billion at an annualized rate, the CBO estimated.

The report said overall economic growth, as measured by the gross domestic product, could fall by between 0.5 percentage point and a full percentage point for the second half of this year.

Before the hurricane, private economists were forecasting growth in the second half would come in between 3 percent and 4 percent following growth of 3.6 percent in the first half of

this year.

There have been some promising signs on the energy front in recent days with crude oil prices dropping as more Gulf Coast production resumes. The Energy Department said Wednesday that domestic oil production and refinery output should return to pre-hurricane levels by November.

In the report, the department said natural gas prices for the Midwest will increase as much as 71 percent.

'06 Budget Whittled Down

The political chess match over the Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 budget is apparently coming down to the nitty-gritty. With administrative and legislative leaders making concentrated efforts in recent days on coming to agreements on some of the low-lying fruit, the state's largest budgets — the Department of Corrections, Higher Education and the Department of Community Health, are among those budgets outstanding.

As was the situation earlier this summer (See *MIRS*, "Top 10 Most Contentious Budget Items," June 13, 2005), the Newberry Prison/Lake County punk prison, Northern Michigan University/Wayne State University cuts, and the welfare roll changes remain the main sticking points.

First off, negotiators are still haggling over what to do with the Newberry prison, which the Governor and the House want to keep open, and the privately run Michigan Youth Correctional Facility in Baldwin, which the Department of Corrections wants to close but the GOP wants kept open.

One quick solution would be to find additional revenue to keep both facilities open, but there's still opposition to that option. Another alternative would be to put money in the budget for both prisons and allow the governor to line-item veto funding for the one in Baldwin.

On the Higher Education budget, the governor continues to push hard for the restoration of money for Northern Michigan and Wayne State universities, which the House and Senate sliced. Wayne's allocation was cut 5 percent and Northern's was cut 10 percent.

Community Health is the third budget also up in the air. The fact that it is the biggest unresolved headache comes as no surprise given all the comments about escalating Medicaid costs from all of the parties.

The signals from both sides of the aisle in the Senate indicates no one is in the mood to kick persons off the welfare rolls unlike the attitude in the house, which embraces a "five-years-and-out" approach for welfare recipients.

On the education side of the equation, there are "some hopes" that all-but-certain \$175 boost in the foundation grant could be even larger. But word from the talks getting back to key lawmakers is that there is no agreement to spend more on categorical items or for the 5th grade science upgrade that some in the House favor. The issue is still on the table.

United Way request huge, but warranted

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Looking at the charitable landscape, it may seem that the generosity of Americans is being taxed heavily. That begs a question looming large for local fund-raisers, especially with hurricane relief on the radar screen: Will people have sufficient reserves of generosity to support local needs -- such as the \$3.3 million fund-raising drive this fall of United Way of Jackson County? The optimistic folks at United Way kick off their campaign Friday with an ambitious 10 percent increase over last year's goal. Unfortunately, such a large increase is not warranted by comparable income increases in most households or businesses. Yet there is nothing in charitable fund-raising lore that holds anyone to giving a static amount, based on the level of prosperity one enjoys.

In fact, the nuances of fund-raising include this reality: For all the generosity for which they are rightly applauded, most donors can afford to dig deeper. One Internet-based newsletter for nonprofit groups, JustGive.org, says the average American gives 3.2 percent of income to charity -- up from the past, but still well below the traditional 10 percent tithe in church giving.

Moreover, typically the poor give a greater percent of their income than the wealthy. Households earning under \$10,000 a year (well below the poverty line) give about 5.2 percent of their income to charity. That's a greater portion of income than any other income group.

Therefore, we only wish United Way well in boosting its community fund-raising goal. There are large, untapped wells of charitable giving in this or any community.

But aside from that issue, there is the matter of local need. The fact that Katrina has ravaged New Orleans and the Gulf Coast demands a great charitable response from this and other communities in the nation. But that in no way reduces the level of local needs. There continue to be endemic social problems in Jackson that must be dealt with, and our local efforts -- supported in part by the annual United Way drive -- need the support of local people and businesses to continue addressing those needs.

One of the reasons for the 10 percent larger goal this year is United Way's greater sense of urgency in addressing the needs of early childhood. Young children in Jackson are typically born smaller, are more apt to have teen mothers, and have higher death rates. Our statistics explain why so many of these kids are "at risk," why they struggle in school and throughout life. Any dollars raised above \$3 million in this fall campaign will go to additional children's programs. That is not the entire story, however. United Way is a valuable support for about 40 agencies that serve the needs of people from cradle to grave in Jackson County. These range from national stalwarts such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and the Salvation Army to more local groups like AWARE, the Respite Care Program, and the Center for Family Health.

A significant change in United Way's funding structure almost three years ago has put more accountability in the process of identifying spending priorities and demanding outcomes from agencies that are awarded money. As a result, the community can take comfort in the fact that money is being spent with great care to make sure agencies produce the results they promise. So by all means, express your deep concern for the suffering people in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. But don't forget your neighbors in need here in Jackson County. The help provided by United Way's annual drive is what sustains many of them.

The Jackson Citizen Patriot

For too long, America ignored its poor

Here in America, the land of opportunity, we gave up on the poor more than two decades ago. Under the careful tutelage of Ronald Reagan and other conservatives, we learned that the poor were simply too lazy to improve their prospects and their misery was their own fault.

We gave up on the white poor and the black poor, even though black Americans had suffered under three centuries of unconscionable oppression before a brief period — less than three decades — when they began to be treated as fully human. We gave up on the Native American poor, though they had been the victims of a historic savagery amounting to a holocaust.

We not only gave up trying to help the poor, but we also bought the argument that trying to assist them, especially through government programs, would just make matters worse. After all, years of relentless right-wing radio have taught us that the poor are illiterate, sick and jobless because of government welfare policies — or because they choose to be. So we turned our backs on the impoverished and tuned them out, leaving them stranded in the worst neighborhoods, worst schools and the worst geography — next to landfills, on top of toxic dumps, in the swamps.

So the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina — with its pathetic images of desperately poor people, mostly black people, stuck in New Orleans without food, water or adequate shelter after all the affluent people had fled — should come as no surprise. This is a natural consequence of a political and social culture that has decreed: You're poor? Why would anyone want to be poor? Tough luck. You're on your own.



CYNTHIA TUCKER

In fact, the Times-Picayune in New Orleans used just those words to describe the hurricane evacuation plan authorities put in place for residents who didn't own cars.

Reporter Bruce Nolan wrote in July:

"City, state and federal authorities are preparing to give the poorest of New Orleans' poor a historically blunt message: In the event of a major hurricane, you're on your own. In scripted appearances being recorded now, officials such as Mayor Ray Nagin, local Red Cross Executive Director Kay Wilkins and City Council President Oliver Thomas drive home the word that the city does not have the resources to move out of harm's way an estimated 134,000 people without transportation."

As least Nagin and his fellow city officials were trying to figure out how to get the poor out of town if disaster struck. Working with an antipoverty agency and the Red Cross, they envisioned a private initiative, Operation Brother's Keeper, in which churches would enlist members with cars to offer rides to the have-nots.

By contrast, the ill-informed, incompetent Michael Brown, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is still puzzled by all those poor people who refused to order their chauffeurs to crank up the Bentleys. Last week, he told CNN:

"I think the death toll may go into the thousands. And unfortunately, that's going to be attributable a lot to people

who did not heed the evacuation warnings. And I don't make judgments about why people choose not to evacuate. But you know, there was a mandatory evacuation of New Orleans. And to find people still there is just heart-wrenching to me because the mayor did everything he could to get them out of there."

If you're somebody like Brown, it's awfully easy to forget that there are people too poor to have a car, a credit card or a checking account, people stranded outside the magic circle, people without friends in high places. With Brown's GOP connections, he landed a job at FEMA after he was forced out as so-called czar of the International Arabian Horse Association.

In fact, it's easy for all of us who live in relative prosperity to forget that most of us are here because we had the good sense to be born to the right parents. While a few impoverished young adults can still scratch and claw their way

into the mainstream, it is getting harder and harder to do so as the industrial jobs that created the great middle class are disappearing. (Why do you think so many working-class sons and daughters volunteer for the armed forces?) Income inequality is increasing in this country; the latest census shows that the number of people living in poverty is rising.

Still, a few predictable voices on the far-right fringe are already thinking up ways to blame Hurricane Katrina's victims for their plight. Some are playing up the lawlessness of a few thugs; others are casting responsibility for the crisis solely on local authorities.

Haven't we listened to those callous self-promoters long enough?

Hurricane Katrina overwhelmed levees and exploded the conventional wisdom about a shared American prosperity, exposing a group of people so poor they didn't have \$50 for a bus ticket out of town.

If we want to learn something from this disaster, the lesson ought to be: America's poor deserve better than this.

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